THE ROLE OF ELEARNING APPLICATIONS WITHIN THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY SECTOR: ELEARNING COURSES FOR TRAVEL AGENTS

Lorenzo Cantoni
Nadzeya Kalbaska

Università della Svizzera italiana
USI Lugano, Switzerland

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There are some DMOs that offer training and accreditation online to retail travel agents to become *destination specialists*.

(Handbook on e-Marketing for Tourism Destinations, UNWTO, 2008)
DMOs / NTOs...

- thanks to ICTs got a direct contact with travelers / prospects
- have been perceived (and maybe have become) as a threat to intermediaries
- but...

- ... are realizing that travel agents
  - are not (AT ALL) their enemies
  - are still alive and could be allies
  - should be involved also through internet-supported B2B initiatives
Brick and Mortar Travel Trade

- have lost market-share, and many disappeared, especially in economically advanced countries (where FIT do live)
  - too early to declare their end
  - do still play a major role in developing markets and for specific segments...

- have embraced ICTs as pioneers, but then started to feel threatened by them
  - are striving to find their place in the new eTourism context
Don’t count travel agents out just yet.

Although online travel websites like Orbitz and Travelocity are now responsible about 70% of travel booking in the U.S., the folks who work out of brick-and-mortar travel agencies are reporting booming sales.

Travel agents say revenues, bookings and the total number of clients are up in the first half of 2014 compared with the same period last year, according to a survey by the American Society of Travel Agents, which represents nearly 6,000 travel agents across the country.

Of the agents questioned in the survey, 47% reported higher revenue, with 27% saying revenue has remained about the same as last year. Also, 45% reported more transactions this year, with 30% saying business has been about the same.

The surge in business for travel agents may be a sign that Americans—encouraged by an improved economy and higher home values—are turning to travel agents to plan more intricate vacations, according to travel agents.

“You book an airline seat or a hotel online,” said Jay Johnson, owner of Coastline Travel Advisors in Garden Grove. “But if you want to do something more exotic like go to Buton in Indonesia, you want to talk to an expert.”
OTAs, Planning & Reviews and Traditional Travel Agent Sites are Most Visited

Share of Visits by Travel Category
(Share of segment’s total travel visits claimed by each travel category, Aug’13-Jan’14 aggregate)

- OTA: 28.00%
- Planning and Reviews: 1.40%
- Meta/Lead-Gen: 12.40%
- DMO: 19.10%
- Cruise Line: 25.70%
- Car Rental: 6.10%
- Airline Supplier: 0.10%
- Travel Agent: 1.60%
- Other: 3.70%
- Hotel Supplier: 0.90%

Read as: 3.7% of all visits to Travel Sites made by segment members were attributed to DMOs
Prospects / travellers

- some have embraced with enthusiasm ICTs
- others are (getting) confused by info overload
  - looking for assistance
- others do not have access (yet)
Between 2009 and 2012 almost doubled.

As of now:

**eLearning offers by NTOs:** 75

**Target public:** Travel Agents and Tour Operators

**Providers:** DMOs (including the city level!)

**Teaching/learning strategy:** self-study, asynchronous mode
How they work

Contents
- Geography, Culture, Languages, Traditions, Accommodation, Transportation, Formalities, Itinerary Planning, Selling tips

Incentives
- certificate
- suggested travel consultants’ list
- promotional gadgets
- discounts
- invitations to educational trips
Participation and awareness in three markets

**Participation in destinational eLearning courses**

- United Kingdom: 103 (54.2%)
- India: 72 (26.5%)
- New Zealand: 55 (33.3%)

**Awareness about destinational eLearning courses among those who haven't participated**

- United Kingdom: 57 (65.5%)
- India: 73 (36.5%)
- New Zealand: 76 (69.1%)
## Motivations

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<tr>
<th>NTOs</th>
<th>Travel Trade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>coordinate industry partners</td>
<td>upgrade knowledge and skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>curate brand identity</td>
<td>overcome competition</td>
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<td>enhance educational opportunities among trade partners globally</td>
<td>satisfy the needs of a new consumer</td>
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<td>save on training and trade partnership costs</td>
<td>study online (from office/home) as unable to leave the enterprise for in-present trainings, workshop, road shows</td>
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<td>help travel trade to effectively plan, promote and sell the destination</td>
<td>get certified</td>
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<td>provide credibility to travel agents through certification</td>
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The case of Ticino Switzerland Travel Specialist

- www.ticino.ch/e-learning
- Total number of users: 650
- Certified users: 281
Thanks!

prof. Lorenzo Cantoni & dr. Nadzeya Kalbaska
Università della Svizzera italiana
USI Lugano, Switzerland
webatelier.net

lorenzo.cantoni@usi.ch
nadzeya.kalbaska@usi.ch

More info:
www.elearning4tourism.com

To try a course:
www.ticino.ch/e-learning